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Teaching sociology in large classes: Issues and challenges in Bangladeshi colleges



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ABSTRACT

This study attempts to explore a major issue of higher education in Bangladesh that is, problems related to large size classes. The objectives of the study are (i) to identify the problems faced by the students and the teachers, and (ii) to find out the ways of teaching effectively in large Sociology classes. This study has investigated the current teaching practices in the Sociology Classes at the affiliated colleges of the National University of Bangladesh. This paper also discussed the issue from the global perspective. Systematic observation was the data collection method in this study. It has identified that large classes create a lot of problems for the students and the teachers resulting in the lower quality of higher education. Finally the paper concluded that teachers' training, appointing supporting stuffs and ensuring necessary logistic support can be the possible solution of this great problem.

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Introduction

The literacy rate of Bangladesh was extremely low, decades earlier, and people considered higher education (also known as tertiary level education) as a luxury (Monem & Baniamin, 2010). But the situation has been changed over time with the socio-economic development of the country. It is also true that higher education is very crucial for any country that aims to achieve a higher level of development (Mahmud, 2019 Islam, 2008). Moreover, socio-political forces of the country demand quantitative growth of education rather than qualitative (Alam, Mishra, & Shahjamal, 2014 and Islam, 2008). All these factors contribute to the expansion of higher education in the country. The enrolment rate in higher education is increasing day by day (Mahmud, 2019 and Monem & Baniamin, 2010).

The increased number of students in higher education contribute to the increase in class size. Sometimes the class size is so large that it becomes very difficult for the teachers to teach properly (Haque, Muhammad, Faruki, & Islam, 2019). Specially teaching a theoretical subject like sociology in large classrooms becomes more problematic. According to C. Right Mills, enhancement of critical thinking is an essential for sociologists in order to relate the theories of sociology to the reality (Nefes, 2012). But both the teachers and the students in Bangladesh face various problems in the process of teaching-learning due to the large size of classes which is the main concern of this study. There is an affiliated university among the public universities in Bangladesh named the National University under which more than 2000 colleges are functioning (Islam, 2008; Hussain, 2014). These colleges are offering higher education to a huge number of students. This study has focused on the large Sociology classes of these colleges. Our experience has been described with the support of relevant literatures to explain the prevailing situation and find out possible ways to improve the situation. The research questions that guide this study are: (i) what are the problems faced by the students in large sociology

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classes? (ii) What are the problems faced by the teachers in large sociology classes? (iii) How can sociology be taught effectively in large classrooms?

The study was an observational study that observed the classes at the department of sociology of Rajshahi College throughout the academic year of 2016-17. Then the primary data gathered from observation were analysed with special references of existing literatures to get valid findings. The government of Bangladesh has recognized that higher education is critically important for the rapid growth of the economy (Nagashima et al., 2014). So that, the facilities of higher education are being expanded all over the country in order to reduce the difficulties of the students and ensure them a homely environment (Monem & Baniamin, 2010). As the government is trying to strengthen the higher education system in the country, the universities and colleges are being allowed to accommodate a larger number of students compared to before (World Bank, 2014; Islam, 2008). As a result, the rate of enrolment has increased with time but the qualitative growth of education is still ignored (Alam et al., 2014 and Monem & Baniamin, 2010; Islam, 2008). Moreover there is an interdisciplinary imbalance that shows the preference of humanities, social sciences and general science over the more technical disciplines (Islam, 2008). This preference contributes to enlarge the size of classes of these preferred subjects. Sociology is a well demanding subject at present and it is taught in a small number of colleges under the National University. So, it is not unexpected that the class size of this discipline is often larger than others. In higher education system, large size classes are found in countries like USA, France, Italy, Holland etc. (Biggs, 1999). But this is a great problem for a developing country like Bangladesh because of its limited resources.

Additionally many literatures argue that large classes at higher education level produce certain problems for both the students and the teachers which may affect the success of teaching-learning process (Mulryan-Kyne, 2010). Several studies have been done in the field of teaching-learning issues. Some of them are related to class size; some to quality of teaching; some to sociology teaching. But this study particularly focused on the issues and challenges of teaching sociology in large classes of the colleges affiliated to the National University of Bangladesh. It analysed the problems of large sociology classes in terms of the subject matter, appropriate teaching-learning method and expected study environment of sociology. Finally this study suggested the way of solving the problems of teaching sociology in large classes. The findings of this study can help the policy makers to take necessary steps to enhance the quality of higher education in Bangladesh.

Literature Review

This paper intends to review the existing literatures on the issues and challenges of teaching Sociology in large classes; and the possible solutions of them. Both online and library sources were searched sincerely, but only a few scholarly sources were found as there are very few number of researches on the government colleges of Bangladesh. Google search engine and Google Scholar were the major online sources whereas different libraries of the country like- the Public library of Dhaka, library of National Academy for Educational Management, library of the University of Dhaka, library of the University of Rajshahi etcetera. After a long search, only a few numbers of articles were found in some reputed journals, and some more were found in some less reputed journals. Research reports of World Bank and Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies were also sources of secondary. Observation, on the other hand was the source of some qualitative primary data. We observed the teaching-learning situation of the Department of Sociology of Rajshahi College systematically for one academic year, that is, 2016-17. After observing the classes of all undergraduate and graduate level classes of the aforesaid academic year and department with the help of a checklist, we analysed the primary data with the support of secondary data gathered from the literatures.

Current practices

Current condition of large classes in Bangladeshi colleges

As many studies suggest, the rate of enrolment in higher education has increased tremendously over last few decades (Rahman et al., 2019; Mahmud, 2019). To accommodate these increased number of students the National university of Bangladesh is playing a vital role through its affiliated colleges. Now the number of students studying in these colleges is around 1.5 million (Hussain, 2014). This huge number of students completes their graduate or post graduate degrees from different colleges that are situated at different places of the country. But all the colleges of the National University do not get same facilities in terms of establishment period, academic disciplines and programmes, merit and number of students, number of teachers and other logistic supports (Hussain, 2014). Usually the colleges of city areas enjoy more facilities than the colleges of semi-urban areas. But large class size is a common problem for almost all the government colleges, no matter where it is situated. Class size varies depending on subject or discipline. Commonly the classes of arts or social science faculty are more crowded than that of science or commerce faculty classes. The number of undergraduate students enrolled in the colleges is habitually very high compared to the accommodation in classrooms. So, the class size is large with no facilities like sound system, multimedia projector and emergency power support (IPS or generator). As a result, in most of the cases the classes become too crowded to conduct an effective class. Without sound system, the teacher often fails to convey the message of his lecture to the students. The classrooms are so congested that it prohibits the teacher to move around the class or come closer to the students. Due to the absence of multimedia projector, it also becomes very difficult to the teacher to demonstrate anything in his classroom. Besides all these challenges when power cut occurs (power cut or load shedding is a very common incident in Bangladesh, especially during the summer.) it becomes almost impossible to continue the class.

Sociology is a discipline that deals with a lot of theories which are related to social reality. Students need to understand the theories in such a way that they can explain social issues with the light of those theories. Moreover they should also have the capacity to analyse various social problems and find out possible solutions of them. All these require higher level of critical thinking of the students that needs intensive knowledge. But in a large class the teacher cannot take good care of individual students and this may result in the shallow learning on the subject matters. Students also face different types of problems in large classes and at the end of the day the quality of education is very poor. The whole process of teaching-learning is hampered because of the size of classes.

Current teaching practices in sociology classes in Bangladeshi colleges

As a separate discipline, Sociology is getting more popular day by day. Both the number of colleges offering higher education in this discipline and the students are increasing rapidly in Bangladesh (Hussain, 2014). Now-a-days Sociology is one of the most preferred disciplines for undergraduate students. But still necessary logistic supports and other facilities required for quality education are not satisfactory in the department of Sociology in different government colleges under the National University of Bangladesh (Hussain, 2014). The size and number of classrooms, library facilities, teacher-student ratio, quality teacher, availability of teaching-learning materials - nothing is in favour of effective teaching-learning process. According to Hussain (2014), the teacher - student ratio in government colleges is 1:116 and on average there are only 5 faculty members in the department of Sociology of government colleges. This ratio is undoubtedly very high and indicates that the teachers have to engage with a lot of activities. Moreover in most of the colleges there is no supporting stuff for the department of Sociology, teachers themselves have to do the entire official works besides teaching (Hussain, 2014). The study of Hussain further found that, the seminar library facility is also very poor for the students with very little reference books and congested place. All these obstacles result into poor preparation of the teacher before delivering a lecture due to shortage of time and over load of work (Hussain, 2014). Because of the shortage of classrooms, inadequate number of teachers, adverse teacher-student ratio, excessive workload of teachers and enrolment of larger number of students than accommodation the class size is often very large in the department of Sociology (Hussain, 2014; Monem & Baniamin, 2010;). Like the large classes of any other discipline in the National University (describe in the previous paragraph) the same problems exist in large Sociology classes. In some colleges Situated at city area, there are multimedia projector and sound system in the classrooms, but the number of colleges including these facilities is very limited.

The number of classrooms allotted for the Department of Sociology in our college is four and among them one classroom is shared with the Department of Islamic History and Culture. The Department of Sociology can use that room for half of the whole class time. Again, among the four classrooms, two can accommodate 40 students, one can accommodate 175 students and the rest one (the shared one) can accommodate 200 students. The number of students enrolled in undergraduate level in this department in each academic session is 235 and the number of teachers currently working in this department is 11. The number of students enrolled in M.S.S 1st and 2nd part is 350. The teacher-student ratio is 1:149. All these data demonstrate the scenario of poor teaching-learning environment. None of the classrooms can accommodate the total number of students and two of them are almost unusable in terms of seat numbers. But there are some facilities (multimedia projector and sound system) in Sociology classrooms of this college that help the teachers to handle this huge number of students. But we don't get sound system in the shared classroom whereas it is essential for this room as it is the biggest classroom of this department. Furthermore the teachers are engaged with heavy workload. So, it is clear that, the large size of classes in the department of Sociology is one of the major challenges in terms of ensuring quality education.

Current teaching practices in our sociology classes

As a Sociology teacher of an affiliated college of the National University of Bangladesh we also face various problems regarding teaching-learning process. The college where we work is situated at a divisional city and it is the best college among all affiliated colleges according to the Ranking carried out by the National University. No doubt the teaching-learning environment is much better in this college than that of other colleges. But still we have to face problems like overcrowded classroom, shortage of classrooms, power cut, shortage of reference books and enough space in seminar library, excessive workload etc. Among all these problems the class size needs more attention because it creates many other associated problems. As described in previous section, among four classrooms of Sociology department the shared one does not have sound system.

In other three classrooms we can demonstrate essential topics that enhance the interest of the students to the subject matter and increase the effectiveness of the class as well. But applying student centred learning and ensuring feedback seems to be impossible because of the crowd in the classrooms. Paying attention to individual students is also impossible in this type of teacher-student ratio (1:149). It is also very difficult in our classes to get closer to the students as a result of congested seating arrangement. As a result, most of the students remain passive in the class and fail to catch the message of the lecture. Sometimes we cannot accommodate all the students presented in the class and many of them are standing throughout the whole period. Sometimes we find many students waiting out of our classroom because they have a class in the same room just after our class. The noise made by the students standing outside the room breaks the concentration of both us and our students'. Especially in the summer, when power cut occurs, it becomes almost impossible to breathe in our classrooms and sometimes we have no other choice than ending the class before time. To keep record of attendance also become very difficult and time consuming. So, the attendance rate is never satisfactory in our classroom. Beside all these problems, we cannot avoid the impact of excessive workload. we have to work in several committees as a part of our job, assess the papers of both internal and central examinations of these huge number of students, prepare the results of internal examinations, arrange different events for the students etc. Shortage of supporting stuffs makes the situation more adverse. After

completing all our duties, in many cases we do not get sufficient time to be prepared properly for our next lecture. So, the students are not benefitted enough in those classes. Overall the whole situation is not favourable for conducting effective class and promoting quality education in tertiary level.

Problems of large classrooms

There is no precise definition of large class in higher education, but according to Biggs (1999), when the number of student in a class is so large that it hampers effective teaching it can be considered as a large class. So, the number of students in a large class can vary depending on existing situation (Biggs, 1999). In many cases large class size is not a problem at all; in fact large classes are common in tertiary level education in many developed countries like France, USA, Holland, Italy, etc. (Mulryan-Kyne, 2010; Biggs, 1999). According to Mulryan-Kyne (2010) in many cases large size class creates several challenges for the teachers and it also has negative effects on the students. Usually large classes in university level consists of students belonging to different age group, experience, cultural identity and socio-economic background (Biggs, 1999). To deal with this diverse type of students is not an easy task for the teachers and the staffs. Biggs (1999) argues that increase in the size of classes contributes to the increase in the problems faced by both the students and the teachers. Not only that, uncontrollable size of class caused by the increased number of enrolment in higher education also creates various problems for the management and the administration (Islam, 2008). The students face some particular problems in a large class that effects negatively in their learning. The intensity of teacher-student communication and the exchange of views between these two (teachers and students) types of people is comparatively lower in large classes; in most of the cases students are anonymous and passive (Mulryan-Kyne, 2010; Biggs 1999; Carbone and Greenberg 1998). Unlike a small class, the students are not familiar to each other and this can be the reason of absenteeism (Mulryan-Kyne, 2010). Sometimes this anonymity and lack of accommodation in classroom result in the tolerance to absenteeism.

Additionally, in a large class, the students have a very poor engagement with the course content that leads to lower level of commitment and motivation (Mulryan-Kyne, 2010). Mulryan-Kyne (2010) found in the writing of Ward and Jenkin (1992) that the first year undergraduate students suffer more in a large class setting because of their unpreparedness for the existing situation. Gibbs in his study (1992) found lower level of participation, isolation from the society and lack of necessary resources as the problems faced by the students in a large class (Mulryan-Kyne, 2010). Carbone and Greenberg (1998) identified some specific problems faced by the students in a large class like: unsatisfied learning outcome; lack of students' preparation and motivation, responsibility, effective interaction with teacher, chance of discussion, facilities and learning environment. All these problems make the students dissatisfied about the quality of education that they get in a large class (Carbone & Greenberg, 1998). Although many teachers are fairly comfortable in large classes (Mulryan-Kyne, 2010), many of them face some specific problems in teaching in large classes. In fact, teaching effectively in large classes is an on-going challenge for many universities (Carbone & Greenberg, 1998). Ward and Jenkins (1992) argued that teacher's effort to build a good relationship with students can be resulted in over-expectation of the students on them (Mulryan-Kyne, 2010). Gibbs (1992) found that in large classes the discussion on course material become shallow and selective, problems of audibility, visibility and concentration are present and it is very difficult for the teacher to judge the effectiveness of class in terms of students understanding (Mulryan-Kyne, 2010). Ward and Jenkins (1992) also found that there are many more problems of teaching in large classes like- entering and exiting from the classroom need more time resulting in shortening the lecture, noise created by the large number of students limit the scope of effective feedback or formative evaluation (Mulryan-Kyne, 2010).

Moreover, many teachers are not skilled enough and well prepared to conduct large classes (Carbone & Greenberg, 1998). Unavailability of sufficient copies of text and reference books is also a great problem of large class (Mulryan-Kyne, 2010). Carbone and Greenberg (1998) identified some problems faced by the teachers in large classes like: limited chance of accessibility to the students and formative evaluation, lack of space in classroom, absence of technology based teaching and reward for the teachers (Carbone & Greenberg, 1998).

There are different studies on the problems of large classes in tertiary level education. These studies identified several problems faced by both the students and the teachers. But none of the literatures are of recent time and on the current situation of Bangladeshi Sociology classes. There is still scope for further research in this sector to identify the problems prevailing in Bangladesh. This type of research can contribute to enhance quality education in Bangladesh, especially in the department of Sociology of the affiliated colleges of the National University.

Problems of teaching sociology in large classrooms

Many universities and colleges enrol a large number of students resulting large size classes in undergraduate level which contribute to create various structural problems for the teachers who want to use different types of teaching methods in their class (Mollborn & Hoekstra, 2010). Large classes usually includes different types of students (Biggs, 1999). Shaping critical thinking with sensibilities to both interpersonal and intercultural matters is a great challenge of teaching Sociology (Suoranta, 2008). The academics of sociology agrees with Devil and McKay's point of view that any student who has got the chance to get higher education should also get the opportunity to succeed and achieve desired goal (Black & Rechter, 2013).

A sociology teacher who has to teach a large number of students and various courses together faces some institutional limitations and cannot avoid heavy workload (Kapitulik, 2013). A lot of Sociology teachers struggle to develop current practices related to

participation of the students in classroom, understanding of the course content by the students, and enhancing critical thinking in a large class setting (Mollborn & Hoekstra, 2010). The main problem of this type of classes is more pedagogical in which lecturing remains as the only possible teaching method (Kapitulik, 2013; Mollborn & Hoekstra, 2010). According to Trees and Jackson (2007), sometimes lecture method can be blended with questions or discussions within it, but this method rarely contribute to enhance the critical thinking of students (Mollborn & Hoekstra, 2010). In large classes teachers encounter more challenges compared to other classes in terms of keeping attendance record and on the other hand, students also find it difficult to cope up with the syllabus if they miss any class (Mollborn & Hoekstra, 2010). Traditional Sociology teachers conduct their class in lecture method without deep conversation on the subject matters of sociology and in most of the cases the evaluation system is a written one (Kapitulik, 2013).

According to Kapitulik (2013), in this prevailing system of large size class, some students lack sufficient preparation for their evaluation and the teachers also face great difficulty in assessing huge number of papers. As a result goals like students participation in class and inspiring them in critical thinking are mostly ignored in large Sociology classes (Mollborn & Hoekstra, 2010). Suoranta (2008) argues that the teaching method is at least partially responsible for the superficial attitudes of the students. In fact, some researches revealed that the current practice of large class size contributes to this type of attitudes of the students (Suoranta, 2008). There is a debate on the pedagogical practice appropriate for Sociology class-some argued that the course content is more important than teaching method and others argued for the opposite (Suoranta, 2008). But in his regard, Giroux (1981:83) stands for the more proper point of view, that is, there must be an integration between the course content and the pedagogical practice (Suoranta, 2008). Building relationship between the teacher and the students or developing rapport with the students become a great challenge in large sociology classes where the learning of all students is very difficult (Kapitulik, 2013).

In a large class teacher usually use lecture method even if he does not like it (Kapitulik, 2013). The teacher assumes that the students seating before him are learning during the class, but many doubted that lecture method is not appropriate for sustainable learning (Mollborn & Hoekstra, 2010). As a result of the defective teaching practice in classes, the learning of the students contribute to their pessimistic, uninterested, self-centred, superficial view of the corresponding institution and the capitalist world (Suoranta, 2008). But Souranta (2008) believes that, students will be responsible and serious about their learning if provided with a chance because students usually respond positively if anybody shows trust on them. The study of Souranta (2008) also suggests that the different quantity of the teacher's exposure is also of significant importance in a Sociology classroom and sometimes lecturing is also needed. According to Freire (2005:72), the common practice for the teachers is to present themselves as the essential opposite of their students; they justify their presence by absolute ignorance and the students remain alienated just as the slaves described in Hegelian dialectic (Suoranta, 2008). It is found with the support of several literatures that, teaching sociology in large classes creates a lot of difficulties for both the students and the teachers. This paper used the findings of all these literatures in order to explain the current situation of Bangladeshi sociology classes in higher education.

Ways of teaching sociology effectively in large classrooms

The current trend of westernized teaching practice in the field of Sociology needs to be changed through pedagogical change in order to get a fresh, equality based, humanitarian and ecologically healthy world (Suoranta, 2008). Chickering, W. and Gamson (1987) identified seven principles for improving higher education in undergraduate level- Encouraging relationship between teachers and students; Developing mutuality and collaboration among classmates; Using teaching methods in which students will be active; Giving quick feedback; Communicating higher level of prospects; and Respecting diversified talents of the students (Chickering & Gamson, 1987). The principles identified by Chickering and Gamson (1987) are applicable for conducting effective class in any discipline. To make Sociology class effective the teachers can follow these seven principles. There are also many other ways of conducting large classes effectively that are found in different literatures. Lammers and Murphy (2002) identified in their study that as a teaching-learning method lecture is the most traditional one that has a long history, but at present many consider this as an ineffective method. Rather active learning strategies like- presentations, performances, practice of skills, directed writing, peer learning, collaborative learning in small groups, debate, discussion etc. are more preferred methods than lecture (Lammers & Murphy, 2002).

Use of information technology for effective teaching in large classes

In this age of information technology the development of information and communication technology (ICT) has reformed teaching-learning process in tertiary level education dramatically (Shahadat, Khan, Hasan, Kum, & Prof, 2012). According to Pajo and Wallace (2001), Because of its power and competences to make a change in the learning environment in the classrooms, now-a-days the use of ICT in education purpose is more crucial than any time before (Shahadat et al., 2012). Pychyl et al. (1999) argued that the arrival of ICT in education can activate the students in learning without requiring face-to-face meeting which can be very helpful for large size class (Bryant, 2005). Using ICT in education enables the teachers to create strong learning environment in the classroom that promotes quality and sustainable education (Shahadat et al., 2012). According to Plmp et al. (1996), It also helps the teachers to use new teaching-learning methods in their classes and it can also be used to enhance the skills for mutual help, problem solving, communication and lifelong learning (Shahadat et al., 2012). Using ICT allows the teachers to use diversified course related information of electronic format that helps the student to understand the real world situation (Bryant, 2005).

Problem Based Learning as a technique of effective teaching in large classes

Another popular teaching-learning method of present is Problem Based Learning (PBL). PBL is defined as a learning environment in which students learn by solving a problem (Klegeris & Hurren, 2011). In an actual PBL, the problem comes first and students learn through the problem which has great academic benefit (Atre-Vaidya & Taylor, 2000). According to Klegeris and Hurren (2011), PBL is generally used in small classes guided by tutors, but they also found in their study that it can also be applicable in large class setting. This teaching technique improves students' problem-solving skill and enhance various positive learning outcomes significantly even in large classes also (Klegeris & Hurren, 2011). In their study Klegeris and hurren (2011) listed seven stages of PBL - Understanding the condition/explaining terminology; Identifying problem; Setting hypotheses; Connecting problems with causes; Deciding the type of information needed; Gathering information; and, Applying the information (Klegeris & Hurren, 2011). In their study Klegeris and Hurren (2011) concluded that PBL can be used successfully in large classes without any extra tutor. The advocates of PBL argue that the best way of learning is learning through active participation rather than being passive recipient of readymade information (Fukuzawa & Boyd, 2016). The steps of PBL indicates that this technique improves the students' ability for thinking and explaining things critically which is vital in Sociology teaching in tertiary level.

Other methods for effective teaching in large classes

Another popular teaching-learning method of current period is peer learning which focuses on students contributing to the learning of other students (Zher, Hussein, & Saat, 2016). According to Zher et al. (2016), peer commenting and collaborative authorship can be appropriate activities to ensure effective feedback in large classrooms. Using flipped classroom (a classroom where students are active participants and the role of teachers and students are reversed) can also be an effective technique for deep teaching in large classroom (Danker, 2015).

It has been found that there are a lot of techniques for conducting effective class in a large sociology class what is needed is just choose the correct method in terms of prevailing facilities and course content.

Critical and reflective discussions

Discussion on the problems of large classrooms

Many studies identified the problems of large classes with evidences. Some explained the reason behind the increase in class size and some described the specific problems from the point of views of the teachers or the students. From the findings of existing literatures it can be said that the reason behind increasing the class size in higher education is the over expansion of higher education without maintaining the quality of education.

Students face variety of problems in a large classroom that make them unhappy with the quality of education they get. Due to excessive noise and congested seating arrangements they cannot follow the class lecture with full concentration. Lack of relation and chance of discussion with the teacher make them indifferent about the class. Individual talents and weaknesses cannot be addressed in a large classroom. The chance of active participation is also very. Besides, the students do not get sufficient books in their library. Even, most of the students do not recognize many of their classmates and this make them feel alienated. Finally, the poor evaluation system make the students think that class attendance do not contribute much in their final result. All these may contribute to the students' unwillingness to be present in the classes resulting in unsatisfactory attendance rate. Especially the first year students are affected by this adverse situation as they are totally unknown to this reality. In short, the prevailing system totally fails to motivate the students.

The teachers also face various problems while teaching in large classes. The first and foremost problem is the unfavourable teacher-student ratio that comes with heavy workload within and beyond teaching. Then the heavy workload results in shortage of time that prohibits the teacher to be well prepared for the class. Proper monitoring of attendance becomes very difficult in large classes that can contribute to the tolerance to absenteeism. Because of limited accessibility to the students due to congested classrooms paying attention to individual students and building good rapport seems to be impossible for the teachers in a large class. Lack of number of classrooms and number of seats in classrooms make the teaching environment more unfavourable. Assessing the papers of an extremely large number of students is also a very time consuming task that makes the teachers terribly busy. Sometimes it becomes really tough to assess them accurately. Lack of supporting stuffs makes the whole situation more critical. After all these problems, one of the major faults of the system is the lack of reward for the teachers.

There are some problems that affect both the teachers and the students. Problems like lack of modern teaching aids in classrooms, sudden power cut, absence of backup power etc. have direct impact on the quality of lecture. Unfavourable socio-political situation is one of the major reasons behind the problem of large classes in Bangladeshi colleges.

So, there are various problems in the higher education of Bangladesh regarding the number of students in a class. Ensuring quality education is quite impossible without addressing these problems. The government of Bangladesh should identify all the problems related to this issue and solve them in order to achieve desired level of development.

Discussion on the problems of teaching sociology in large classrooms

Teaching in large classrooms is always a problematic one. Teaching Sociology requires a higher level of critical thinking of the students. The subject matter of sociology includes various sociological theories, social relations, institutions, social history, social problems etc. Additionally, it is a must for the Sociology students to have a good knowledge of research methodology and social research. All the subject matters of sociology require critical thinking and problem solving skill. To improve these two, participatory or student-centred learning is essential. But applying this is a difficult task, especially if the class size is large. The problem of teaching Sociology in large classes is mainly a pedagogical problem. In most cases the Sociology teachers use lecture method in their class which is widely considered as the inappropriate method to increase students' ability to think critically. Without sufficient and effective discussion between the teacher and the students, proper understanding of the theories is almost impossible. But a Sociology teacher who has to teach various courses and in large class setting usually has no other choice than using lecture method. No, matter the teacher like it or not, most of the teachers use this method as their only option, at least for some part of the class time. But to teach sociology effectively other methods like demonstration, presentation, PBL in which students become active participants are considered as more effective in order to enhance problem solving skill among the students. Without some participation, nobody can understand research.

Many teachers struggle to teach effectively in large classes whereas some others are comfortable with the setting. Due to the lack of supportive stuffs, the teachers of this Department have to do a lot of unproductive and official works. Moreover in most of the departments the number of teachers is also inadequate. Additionally, like other disciplines, shortage of classrooms and number of seats in classrooms, sudden power cut, inadequate teaching materials or aids are also common in the Department of Sociology. All these problems create a situation where quality education is not ensures at all. The teachers cannot enter into deep explanation of the subject matter due to shortage of time. Sometimes the personal quality of teacher determines the effectiveness of a class. But in most of the cases defective teaching methods are responsible for ineffective class. In fact, the proper blending of pedagogy and course content can ensure effective class and quality education as well. In order to improve the quality of education of the Departments of Sociology in the affiliated colleges of National University, policy makers should focus on all these issues.

Discussion on the ways of teaching sociology effectively in large classrooms

Teaching Sociology effectively in large classrooms is a great challenge for the faculty members of the affiliated colleges of the National University of Bangladesh. They face a lot of problems in teaching a huge number of students. But if there is a problem, there must be a solution also. The teachers can minimize the problems by using diversified teaching methods depending on the course contents. Some possible ways of teaching Sociology effectively in large classes are given below:

- i. *Avoiding the traditional method of teaching (lecture) as much as possible and using more effective teaching-learning methods (student-centred learning) can be the possible solution of the problem of teaching in large classes. This will help the enhancement of critical thinking and problem solving skill.*
- ii. *In this age of information and communication technology (ICT), use of this technology can help the teachers in improving teaching quality in their classrooms. Use of ICT in classroom creates a friendlier learning environment for the students. It will help the teachers in demonstrating related information in the classes of courses like- Social history, cultural anthropology social problems etc.*
- iii. *Problem based learning (PBL) can be used in large Sociology classes in which students are active participants. This will help to enhance problem solving skill and can be used in the class of Social Problems.*
- iv. *Peer learning is also a popular teaching method of current time that also contributes to the enhancement of critical thinking. In this method, students learn from other students. This method also allows the students to be active and enhance their ability to think critically. Theories can be taught through this method.*
- v. *Using feedback in the classroom is also a good method for teaching and evaluating as well. This is useful for all the courses.*
- vi. *Collaborative learning, using clickers and flipped classroom are also some popular method for teaching-learning that can contribute to the effective teaching in large Sociology classes in different courses.*

In fact, there is no particular method for teaching only Sociology. All methods that are helpful for increasing the ability of thinking critically are applicable for Sociology classes. so, the methods described above can be used in large Sociology classes with the intension to enhance the learning outcome in higher education. This will also contribute to the overall development in quality of education in tertiary level at the affiliated colleges of the National University of Bangladesh.

Implications

The current study focused on a major issue in case of higher education in Bangladesh with especial reference of large Sociology classes. The study found that, large classes are very common for sociology departments at the government colleges in Bangladesh as a growing discipline in terms of scope and popularity that come with some difficulties for both the students and the teachers. Both of them experience the lack of positive motivations due to the uncontrolled classroom situation and lower level of learning outcome. An over-crowded class hinders the teachers to make it participatory and apply different innovative strategies especially while teaching a theoretical subject like Sociology. On the other hand, students get a less interactive and less interesting class resulting in higher rate

of absenteeism. Nonetheless, students are not satisfied at all with the quality of education that they are getting from the affiliated colleges of Bangladesh. The problems like shortage of teacher in number; heavy workload of the teachers; shortage of supportive stuffs; insufficient infra-structural and logistic support make the situation even worse. Shortage of supportive stuff results into engaging the teachers with unproductive works and prohibiting them to be engaged in different productive and innovative academic activities. Moreover, the prevailing socio-political situation is not favourable for quality education. All these issues make the teaching-learning process ineffective in the sociology departments at the colleges. Nevertheless there are many teaching-learning methods that help the teachers to conduct Sociology classes effectively in large class settings. Use of ICT, different SCL (Student-Centred Learning) strategies can help the teachers to make their large sociology classes more effective.

Recommendations

After analysing the whole situation regarding teaching in large classes, we would like to recommend some necessary points needed for the development of the current situation:

- i. *The teachers should be trained up in such a way that they can use appropriate teaching methods to minimize the negative impacts of large classes. They should also be trained in ICT. This will produce more quality teacher and quality education as well. This will help the teachers to cope up with prevailing situation and give the best service in even an averse situation.*
- ii. *Sufficient number of supporting stuffs should be appointed. This will reduce the workload of the teachers so that they can get more time to be prepared for their classes. This will make the teachers able to prepare good lesson plan and conduct effective classes as well.*
- iii. *The logistic supports should be increased in the classrooms. Without these supports all the efforts to enhance the quality of education will go in vain. Because if the number of students is more than the capacity of the classroom, the teacher is completely helpless and ensuring quality education is impossible.*

If the policy makers or the authority of the National University notice these recommendations, it will help them understanding the current situation and taking necessary steps to solve existing problems.

Conclusions

Large class size is one of the major problems of higher education in Bangladesh. For many developed countries large class size is not a problem at all, but in Bangladesh it is a great problem. As the discipline of Sociology is a growing discipline with huge number of students in most of the colleges, this study focused especially on the problems of large Sociology classes. Large classes create certain problems for both the students and the teachers which results in the lower quality of higher education in this discipline. Teachers' training, appointing supporting stuffs and ensuring necessary logistic support can be the possible solution of this problem. There is still scope for further research in this field to explore the issue more intensively. This will help to improve the overall teaching quality at the affiliated colleges of the National University of Bangladesh.

The issues and challenges of the higher education of Bangladesh are almost unexplored as very few numbers of researches has been done in this sector. This study has identified the issues and challenges of teaching sociology in large classes on the basis of existing literatures. Further studies can be carried out to find out other issues and challenges of teaching in the government colleges of Bangladesh; and find their solutions as well.

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